GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

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Contents for Week of January 24, 1927. Vol. V. No. 26.

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GUATEMALAN BANANAS START THEIR JOURNEY TO AMERICAN TABLES

(See Bulletin No. 1)

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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Guatemala: Where the Army Flyers Had to Halt Their Flight for Repairs

PAN-AMERICAN good-will flyers, who left San Antonio, Texas, shortly before Christmas, met their second mishap at Guatemala City. The flagship *New York* was damaged as the plane fleet began its flight to San Salvador, entailing a halt of some days.

Army flyers probably did not regret stopping in Guatemala, the most populous and most richly endowed of all the Central American countries.

Guatemala possesses more miles of railroad track than any country between Mexico and South America. The value of Guatemalan exports will be found each year ranking first or second among Central American countries.

Country Always a Leader in Central America

Guatemala's place near the front in Central America is traditional. The first Europeans found the region inhabited by the Maya-Quiche Indians. They were fierce fighters but were among the most civilized people of their time. Their history reads like a romance. The remarkable ruins they have left indicate a widespread realm of power and influence. Spaniards made Guatemala the capital and center for all of Central America and part of Mexico.

After throwing off the Spanish yoke the country was for a time a part of the Empire of Mexico. But in 1823 an independent nation was formed under the title of the Central American Federation, taking in also the present Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. One by one the states seceded and formed independent republics.

Another unsuccessful attempt to unite several Central American countries was made in 1921. A treaty ratified by Guatemala, Honduras and Salvador resulted in a federation known as the Republic of Central America. Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, was the administrative center. The new republic, however, was short-lived. Guatemala to-day continues as an independent nation.

Coffee is the Good Fairy to Guatemala

Guatemala has an area about equal to that of the State of Louisiana and is the second largest of the Central American republics. It is about midway between the United States and South America and fronts on both the Caribbean and the Pacific. Therefore it occupies a commanding position in trade and in international policies. Mountains near the west coast divide its population unequally. The highlands, rising from 1,000 to 5,000 feet above the sea, are by far the most thickly settled part of the country. The long, gradual Atlantic slope is of little importance except for the timber resources in the northern part, the coffee plantations of the Coban plateau, and the banana raising of the Lake Izabal region.

Coffee is the good fairy of Guatemala. Other riches have been overlooked or ignored in the development of great plantations which help to keep America and Europe supplied with coffee. Volcanoes, that so often level its buildings and houses, make rich return by depositing volcanic ash that renews the soil and makes fertilization unnecessary. A large part of the chicle that goes into

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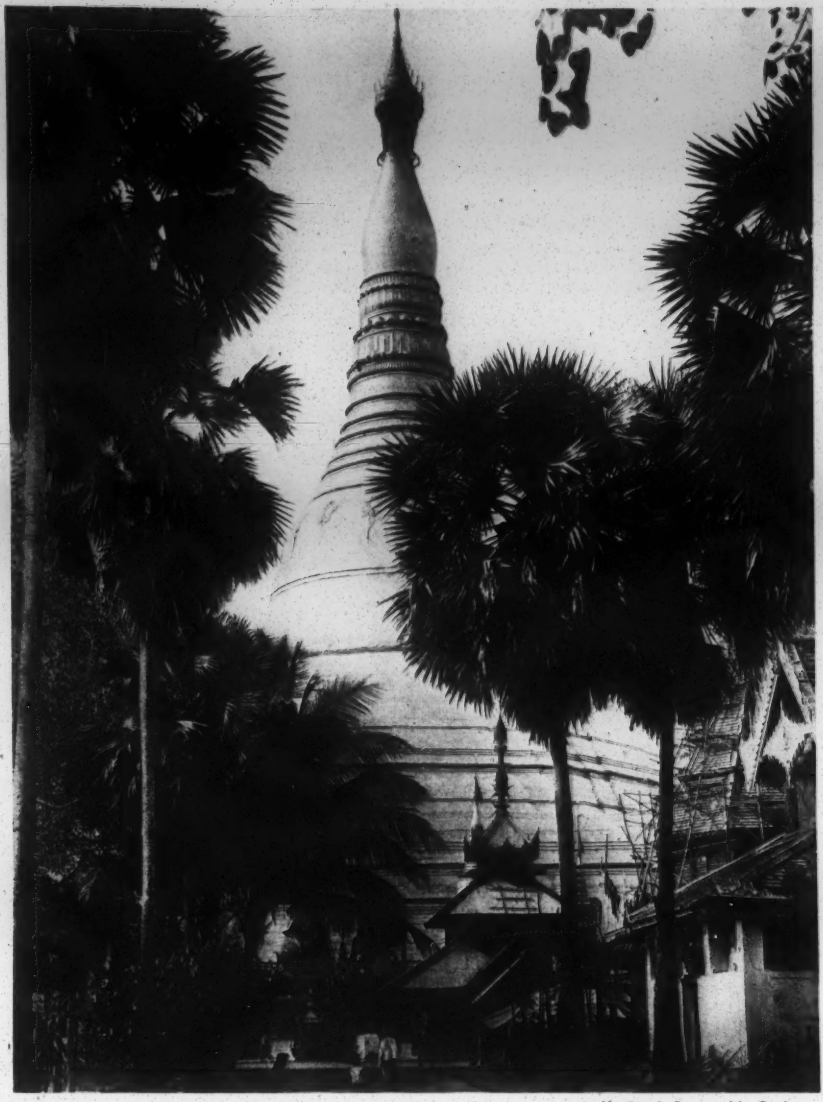

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SHWE DAGON, THE CENTER OF BURMESE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN RANGOON

Tradition has it that holy men deposited eight hairs from the beard of Buddha is an ancient pagoda on a knoll in Rangoon. The people of Rangoon covered this pagoda layer upon layer. The top layer is gold. The Shwe Dagon rises 370 feet above the ground (see Bulletin No. 5).

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The Rise of the Vegetable

A RECORD spinach crop is on its way to market from Texas. This news announcement was tucked away in the financial pages of many papers in the month of January.

Fresh lettuce is speeding eastward on special trains from California, also in January. Each new year sees the housewife less dependent on canned vegetables for the table in winter.

Fresh vegetables as a class are successful upstarts in American markets. Not so many years ago it was necessary to distinguish between grocers and green grocers. Even the corner confectionery often carries green vegetables nowadays. Omitting the staples, potatoes and sweet potatoes, the business in seventeen vegetables came to $236,000,000 in one recent year.

Not Enough Vegetables on Pilgrim's Menu

What would a modern dietitian think of the Pilgrim's first Thanksgiving dinner? Although there is no recorded bill of fare, they probably ate venison, partridge, turkey, fish, oysters, duck, geese, barley loaves and cornbread, pumpkins, squash and wild grapes.

"Terrible," would be the dietitian's verdict. "Too much protein. Important vitamins neglected. There ought to be four or five vegetables. Where is the salad course?"

Pioneering, it seems, demands a meat diet. Although the Pilgrims were living on meat, it was not necessarily the custom in their homeland. By 1600, vegetables were widely used in England and were even more popular on the Continent. Man has made some use of herbs since the dawn of history.

Pharaoh's Grocery Bill for Pyramid Workmen

On a stone of the Great Pyramid in ancient times was an inscription which showed that even Egyptians liked a dash of statistics now and then. It also showed that the laborers liked vegetables. "For radishes, onions and garlic for the workmen," the inscription recorded, "the sum of 1,600 talents." If we use the Hebrew gold talent mentioned in the Bible as the standard rate of exchange, that sum works out at approximately $51,200,000 for radishes, onions and garlic. The American radish and onion crop for two and a half years could be purchased for the settlement of the Pharaoh's green-grocery bill.

The little radish long ranked as the First Family of the Vegetable World. So greatly did the Greeks prefer it to other articles of diet that they had the radish represented with a gold model placed in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. They further showed their preference and elaborated their agricultural extension exhibit with a beet in silver and a turnip in lead.

America has looked to Europe for vegetables, as well as population, to stock our country. Of nineteen vegetable crops, in which the trade is more than a million dollars a year, only six are native to the Americas: Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, sweet corn, green beans and peppers. In dollar value the worth of three native Americans in the vegetable markets—Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes and tomatoes—eclipses the total value of the other sixteen. Among the vegetables coming to us from abroad, lettuce, celery, asparagus and carrots are European. The

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the manufacture of chewing gum in the United States comes from Guatemala. Banana farms in the tropical lowlands recently have become rivals to the coffee plantations in production.

Guatemala City, the nation's capital, presents another example of the progressive spirit of the country. It was practically destroyed by a violent earthquake in 1917. To-day there are hardly any traces of the catastrophe in the orderly, well-built city of churches, theaters, clubs, shops and homes.

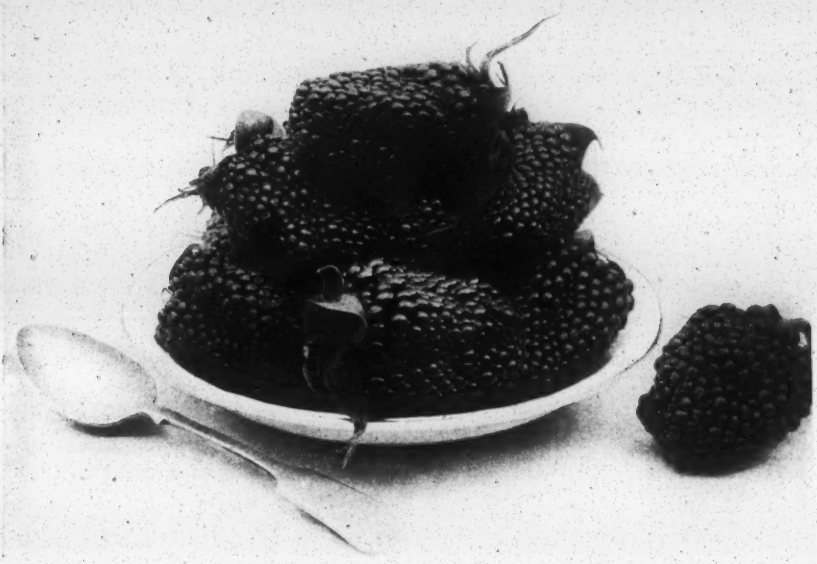
The Quetzal is the National Emblem

About 60 per cent of the population is of pure Indian blood. Almost half the remainder are half-castes. In the mountains of southwestern Guatemala live thousands of pure-blooded Indians, maintaining the traditions of their forefathers. They have won the admiration of travelers for their physique, cleanliness and honesty. One visitor tells of trying to buy a ring from an Indian girl who refused to sell because it was not pure gold. She did not wish to sell a stranger an imitation.

The nature lover finds the tropical lowlands of Guatemala a fascinating land, with their dense forests covering more than a million acres. Giant trees are linked together by trailing vines above a gorgeous carpet of orchids, waxen begonias, the peculiar blossoms of the plantain, the scarlet Poinsettias.

Guatemala's new coins bear the name of the bird that is the national emblem of liberty. The quetzal is more truly a bird of liberty than the American eagle, for the quetzal will not even live if kept in captivity. It is still, as it was to their Maya ancestors, a more or less sacred symbol to the Guatemalans.

Bulletin No. 1, January 24, 1927.



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GIANT BLACKBERRIES FROM COLOMBIA

Most of our vegetables and fruits are immigrants in the United States. Plant hunters of the Department of Agriculture are constantly on the search for better products for American tables. Only six out of nineteen important vegetables in American markets are natives of the American continents (see Bulletin No. 2).

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Modern Madrid Gets the Most Modern Improvements

"HELLO," said King Alphonso in Spanish the other day as he sat in the palace at Madrid, a telephone in his hand, and spoke to the people of Spain.

The king inaugurated a new automatic telephone system linking the entire country. His speech was relayed over 2,375 miles of line to all parts of the peninsula. An American company installed the new system, and Madrid, the capital, is the general headquarters.

Visitors who go by the fast direct trains from Paris to Madrid, and expect to see the colorful costumes and striking architecture one usually associates with life in Spain, are disappointed in Spain's capital city. Madrid's streets swarm with motor trucks and pleasure cars. Underground are two systems of speedy subways, connecting the railroad stations and the principal suburbs of the city. Its boulevards resemble those of Paris and Berlin, with their bordering trees and imposing hotels, public buildings, shops and monuments.

One of the Youngest Cities of Spain

In place of the poncho and sombrero the visitor will find the tailored suit and straw hat of the hustling business man of New York. The latest Paris creations make it difficult to distinguish the Spanish senora and senorita from their racial sisters in Paris, Rome, Havana and Buenos Aires. The languorous strumming of the guitar and the click of the castanets are not Madrid. The incessant "whank, whank" of taxis is the sound of the city.

Madrid is the youngest of the great cities of Spain. It owes its present importance to political creation. Until the middle of the sixteenth century it was an obscure little village of sun-baked adobe houses, clustering around the former Moorish outpost called Madjrit. Philip II sought at this time a capital for his newly united Spain. He rejected one by one the cities of Saragossa, Burgos, Toledo, Moorish Cordova and Seville. Madjrit was in the almost exact geographic center of the kingdom and it had no sectional ties, so Philip declared it the "Unica Corte," or Royal Residence. He changed the spelling of its name to Madrid.

Since it lacked the natural advantages that contribute to rapid growth, Madrid's early days as a capital were as turbulent and uncertain as those of our own national capital. Excepting its central location, Madrid was denied by nature almost every suitable condition for a metropolis. It perches on an elevated steppe in the midst of a vast rolling plateau, bleak and treeless, about a half mile above sea level. Two hundred feet below it winds the insignificant river Manzanares. The surrounding districts are unproductive.

Railroads Made Madrid a Great City

Another element to be reckoned with in Madrid is the climate. Sudden changes of weather often bring great extremes of temperature within a short time. In summer the heat is almost unbearable. People keep in the shade (bullfight tickets cost twice as much on the shady side of the ring), for the sun's rays hit the skin like little red-hot needles. The air is then so keen and subtle that, according to a popular saying, "it will kill a man, while it will not blow out a candle."

onion, cabbage, green peas, cucumbers, cauliflower and eggplant are out of Asia. Watermelon and cantaloupe, it is supposed, are plant immigrants from North Africa.

A Novel Idea for a Dinner Next Spring

Ancestors of practically all fresh vegetables still are to be found. A striking illustration of evolution as applied to plants could be given by preparing a dinner using these ancestors of the modern vegetables. Most of them are not difficult to obtain. They grow in American fields and beside American fences. Almost everyone is familiar with wild lettuce as a field weed. This Cinderella weed is of the same family as crisp, sweet Iceberg head lettuce.

Gather some Queen Anne's lace for the evolution menu. That white midsummer spray is the flower of the wild carrot. Pull it up and see the laughably thin wedge of its root. The grandfather of all beets has a root about as big as a baby's little finger. Wild onions grow widely in America, reversions of some imported stock. They are larger than the onion's true ancestors which spring up in Persian deserts after the winter rains.

Wild cabbage does not grow in the United States. It grows in England, but only an experienced botanist can find it on the windy chalk cliffs. An amateur would look for a head of leaves. The ancestor of all cabbage, and that includes cauliflower and Brussels sprouts, too, is a sprawling weed with tough leaves resembling the figure of oak leaves.

When Weeds Became Vegetables

Nearly all of these field vegetables are bitter. It was the bitter natures of the grandparents of our modern vegetables that recommended them to the human race. Back in the not so long ago people put great trust in herbs as sovereign remedies for all sorts of ills. Innocent celery, a European ditchweed, for example, was listed in the "Herbals" as an important drug. The phrase "cut and dried" is a product of the herb drug period. When the custom went out "herbs" became a "drug on the market." But trade in weeds as drugs brought about their cultivation in gardens. There they became larger and less bitter. People who had used common weeds as medicine began to buy them for food. When people insisted on sweeter and bigger weeds, the weeds became vegetables.

Bringing up the vegetables to suit public preferences is now a task for the expert. A dominant public preference in America is for red vegetables. The original tomatoes were yellow, but few markets to-day will disclose a single yellow tomato. Watermelons that are naturally yellow are just as good as red ones, but only the latter go to market. South Europe, China and Japan favor white radishes which grow in the Orient 3 and 4 feet in length, but the United States likes little red ones. It is the same prejudice that makes a new white potato a sorry wanderer of the streets of New York in midwinter. For years New York has consumed by itself practically the entire export of all crops from Bermuda. Among these are Bermuda new potatoes, which are always red. Georgia and Florida are now producing potatoes just as new and just as early, but they are white, and New York prefers the red ones.

Prejudice may mold and color our vegetables, but to science and invention goes the credit for their present honored position on the American table. Science found that mysterious substances called vitamins were vital to the nourishment of man. Then they found that vegetables were rich in vitamins. Home economics workers broadcast this news. They persuaded the housewives that man could not live by meat and wheat alone. Inventors created the refrigerator car which lengthens the season of most vegetables from one month to twelve. Now a Chicago housewife can market in the Imperial Valley, California, for lettuce in February; in May she turns to Carolina; she buys at home in June; relies upon northern New York in September; and in December her market basket is filled by Florida.

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Reunion: A Five-Layer "Cake," Sometimes Frosted

THE WORLD of books is promised a new volume of memoirs. The promise comes from one of the most out-of-the-way places imaginable, the Island of Reunion, in the Indian Ocean.

Abd-el Krim, who one year ago was threatening the forces of Spain and France in Morocco, is the author. The French government captured him and exiled him to Reunion, so he decided to use his leisure to write the story of his three-year fight on the Riff.

For a writer who likes an equable climate, quietude and simple living, the Island of Reunion is well suited.

A Department of France 7,500 Miles from Paris

Abd-el Krim is quite familiar with Europe. It may lessen the inconvenience of exile for him to live on an island strongly European. To be sure, the Reunioners are not as purely Caucasian as the British and Dutch of South Africa. Still 167,000 of the population of 172,000 are classed as Europeans.

Indeed, Reunion is a department of France. The more familiar departments (counties) of France are within 380 miles of Paris. Reunion is 7,500 miles by steamer and train from Paris. But who is to say it is not a department? In the House of Deputies in Paris, corresponding to the American House of Representatives, sit two duly elected delegates from Reunion. In the Senate is a Reunion senator.

Even the names Reunion has taken from time to time show its intimate link with Europe. Reunion has changed its name with the rise of new political conquerors on the European continent. Mascarenhas was its first name, in honor of a Portuguese discoverer who sailed when Portugal was a first-rate power. Louis XIII was king in 1643 when Flacourt claimed it for France, so it became Bourbon Island. That name was impossible to the Revolutionists. The island therefore became Reunion until a new leader arose in France. Then it became Ile Bonaparte. But since 1848 Reunion has been the official name.

The Five Layers of Reunion "Cake"

Conditions, geographical, climatic, and industrial, have changed less frequently than the island's name. Reunion, ever since its settlement, has been a sort of agricultural five-layer cake. The shore level is marked by the gardens of the ring of towns. Next comes a sweet layer—the sugar-cane belt. Then a dark green layer of forests. Fourth is the plateau region where temperate zone vegetables can be raised. The fifth layer is the brown of the volcanic peaks. Only occasionally is Reunion "cake" frosted with white snow because the broad Indian Ocean tempers the climate.

If Mr. Krim cares to examine a slice of Reunion he will find it "sugar and spice and everything nice." The second layer, as mentioned above, is mostly sugar. Sugar is one of the chief exports of the island. During the World War it profited on sugar. In the spice line Reunion offers cloves. And thereby hangs a tale.

Our medieval ancestors loved to eat. Where the twentieth century spends its surplus on six-cylinder cars, the fifteenth century spent its pennies on its palate.

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The city grew slowly but steadily, stimulated by royal encouragement and subsidy. Gradually it began to take a significant part in the life of Spain outside the realm of governmental activities. Madrid's real prosperity and national importance, however, date from the construction of Spain's railroad systems. It is now the greatest railroad center in the country.

Wealth, industries, and population have come in the wake of the railroads. Madrid, with more than 800,000 residents, is now the largest city in Spain. Fine parks have been laid out over barren hills. Wide, tree-lined streets have pushed into the suburbs to take care of additional homes and buildings. Trees have done a great deal to take away the impression of barrenness. Some say they have mitigated the heat of summer.

From the Puerto del Sol, traffic center of Madrid, ten streets radiate, carrying a network of surface and subway lines to every part of the city. Less than half a mile away is the "Prado," a boulevard lined with fine buildings and from five to eight rows of trees. Along this promenade, which is one of the "show streets" of the world, is the museum called the Prado, containing a collection of art which rivals that of the Louvre in Paris.

Bulletin No. 3, January 24, 1927.

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NEW AND OLD IN SPAIN

The street car entering the land gate to walled Cadiz is typical of modern improvements in Spain. Old walls and old castles remain to please the eye but a Spaniard in Cadiz may also satisfy the twentieth century demand for speed by telephoning Madrid on the new automatic system linking up Spain's important cities.

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Rangoon to Have an Up-to-date Western Water System

RANGOON, largest city of Burma, plans to obtain a modern water supply by erecting a 300-foot dam. Water will flow to this Burmese metropolis through a main 150 miles long.

A municipal announcement like that means much in India! Rangoon has squatted near the mouths of the Irrawaddy, amid fever and pestilence, for many years. Her population, now 300,000, has quenched its thirst with dirty river water. It has thrived or died as disease and plague waxed or waned. And now this Eastern city will have, by the magic of Western engineering, fresh, clean and sweet water to drink.

A volume of Kipling's poems supplies geography for Rangoon. One still can see in Rangoon to-day

"Elephints a-pilin' teak
In the sludgy, squdgy creek."

In the "Song of the Cities," Rangoon greets England thus:

"Hail, Mother! Do they call me rich in trade?
Little care I, but hear the shorn priest drone,
And watch my silk-clad lovers, man by maid,
Laugh 'neath my Shwe Dagon."

The Shwe Dagon to which Kipling here refers is Rangoon's architectural masterpiece. This jewel shrine of Eastern India towers above the city 370 feet high. It is a graceful, golden pile, flashing in the blaze of the sun. Above its peak is a jeweled umbrella, hung with a chime of bells which tinkle at the gentlest breath of wind. Material in this canopy alone is valued at $250,000.

The Shrine of Eight Precious Hairs

Tradition has it that men who had acquired eight precious hairs from the beard of Buddha, decided to bury them on Rangoon's knoll. The original pagoda, 30 feet high, was erected to protect them. This mound was encased with successive layers until a final one of gold now sheaths the great pile. Once in a generation more gold is added by voluntary contributions. Then temple priests receive pounds upon pounds of gold, because in Burma taking a part in the building of a pagoda is a Buddhist act of high devotion.

The Shwe Dagon has no interior. But around it are scores of shrines, with pensive Buddhas enthroned within. At twilight the shadowy forms of people at prayers and the low chant of the monks afford a setting of peace and beauty. By day the bargaining at the bazaars along the road to the shrine and the cries of beggars mar the solemnity of the sacred place.

"The Irish of the Orient"

Like most of the big port cities in southeast Asia, Rangoon is not directly on the sea. It is situated about 20 miles up the Rangoon River. Below the town, along the low river banks, are endless paddy fields. Burma's principal commodity, rice, grows easily in the broad delta. Numerous ocean steamers swing at anchor in the swiftly flowing river off the town.

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The fifteenth century idea of a square meal was red meat well seasoned. Seasoned well did not mean a pinch of salt and a dash of pepper. Our forbears doused pepper on their meat and stuck it full of cloves. The Spice Islands (the Moluccas), in the East Indies, were found to be the native habitat of cloves. The joy with which the Portuguese greeted this discovery could only be equaled to-day by joy at the burst of a Texas gusher oil well. They tried to keep their find a treasured secret. But the Dutch captured the Portuguese Spice Islands. Shrewd Hollanders restricted production of cloves to Amboyna Island and ordered their navy to destroy all other clove trees everywhere. In the face of death at the hands of the Dutch, a man named Poivre introduced the clove tree to Reunion and neighboring Mauritius. Thus Europe was freed from the Dutch monopoly of cloves.

A Town Where Geraniums Are Grown for Profit

Many orchards of clove trees, with their shiny, evergreen leaves, can be seen on Reunion. The clove buds are in clusters. First they are green. When they turn a brilliant red they are ready to be picked. Another specialty from which Reunion profits is vanilla. Reunion shares production of vanilla orchid beans with the Seychelles to the north and with Mexico.

There are three towns on Reunion with a population of more than 18,000—St. Denis, St. Pierre and St. Paul. St. Pierre is probably the most attractive for permanent residence. It is the center of the island's trade in essence of geranium. The flower that decorates our houses and gardens is a commercial product in St. Pierre.

Bulletin No. 4, January 24, 1927.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS were made for the year ending with this issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify The Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

School Service Department,
National Geographic Society,
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Kindly send.....copies of the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS for the school year beginning with the issue of....., for classroom use, to

Name .....

Address for sending Bulletins.....

City..... State.....

I am a teacher in.....school.....grade

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The American in Rangoon gains the impression that other countries than the United States are "melting pots" for many races. In the main business section of the city the native Burmese seems to have been pushed out. There one sees Indians from every section of the peninsula. One also sees Siamese, Chinese and Japanese. Certain shopping streets might have been transported from Canton or Tokyo. Rangoon's immigrants are aggressive. The native Burmese cannot compete with them. In contrast to most other peoples of Asia, the Burmese are frank, open, happy—lovers of life. Their women are not secluded, but are among the freest women in the world. Because of their spontaneity and friendliness they have been called "the Irish of the Orient."

Pair Engaged When They Dine Together

Kipling's reference to silk-clad lovers gives a hint of the Burmese love of display. Desire for beautiful clothes is not confined to the wealthy. A colorful sarong and a silk shirt of finest texture is no proof that the wearer is prosperous.

Courtship in Rangoon has the open and direct methods of the Western world. A young man with friends of his own age calls upon a glossy-haired, olive-skinned, laughing Burmese maid. Generally she is surrounded by a merry group of her own age. If he can persuade her to eat a meal with him, he has won her. However, greater formality is observed when the parents of either party to the match have considerable property.

Bulletin No. 5, January 24, 1927.

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BURMESE COUNTRY FOLK

The Burmese are possessed of a gay and lively disposition and have often been called "the Irish of the Orient." They are more independent, but less practical, than the Hindu, while they have not the keen business instincts of the Chinaman; and as both these people have entered Burma in considerable numbers, the native has now to fight for his economic supremacy.